West Texas A&M University
Institutional Plan

Part 1. Introduction

A clear commitment to distance learning at West Texas A&M University was initiated in the Fall of 1996. This commitment was manifested in a planning process that has occurred over a four-year period. The process included committee input and the data collected from experimental web supported and compressed video courses.

Prior to this time, WTAMU only participated in both the delivery and receiving of courses via TTVN, The Trans Texas Video Network supported by The Texas A&M University System (TAMUS). Delivery focus has been in support of a Physics consortium supported by TAMUS entities. WTAMU has also offered various courses in the environmental and earth sciences, and has received various agricultural courses from Texas A&M University. A non-System university, Texas Woman's University, has also provided a Master of Library Science degree to students at WTAMU.

The Distance Education Policy Development Committee, an ad-hoc subcommittee of the Information Technology Committee, was formed in the Fall of 1996 to consider the possibility of distance learning offerings. The committee, made up of university faculty, staff, and administration, considered the following issues: administrative coordination, technological coordination, and marketing coordination of distance education courses. In response to those areas of interest, the following areas were considered: enrollment management, student services, library services, financial considerations, and faculty development and intellectual property. The input provided highlighted the need to support the augmentation of campus-based delivery with Internet-based delivery of courses and continued support for interactive television delivery. (Appendix A).

As a result of the committees' efforts, an Internet-based university called, "WTOnline" was created by WTAMU. It is composed of students and instructors who come together and fill virtual spaces that are analogous to classrooms—classrooms where real teaching and learning take place. The virtual classroom is mediated through information technologies that promote learning at a distance, specifically, Internet-based instruction. It is important to note that in every case, technology is secondary to course content and is only utilized to support the instructional environment.

West Texas A&M University is a regional institution serving approximately 6600 students. The mission of WTOnline is to better serve the students of our region by providing time- and place-independent options in the delivery of instruction. Online instruction was initiated at WTAMU in the Summer of 1997 with one course from the Division of Education. In the Fall of 1999, 644 students were enrolled in 33 online courses. In the spring of 2001, 1,502 students are enrolled in 50 online courses. Initial programmatic offerings have focused on delivery of courses supporting the MBA degree and the M.Ed. degree in Instructional Technology.

Online learning emphasizes process. That is, online learning involves more than the accumulation and memorization of information. In online courses, high levels of collaboration and interactivity are required to seek, evaluate, and process the prodigious amount of available and useful information available via the computer.

All WTAMU web-based courses are hosted through the WTOnline portal, providing an integrated interface for faculty teaching and students taking courses. Academic departments wanting to develop online courses complete "Non-Traditional Course Request" (Appendix B). The course request describes the learning objectives and provides a description of the course. Faculty must show how the online section of the course is the same as a traditionally taught course, with identical learning outcomes, as supported by various forms of assessment including projects and tests. The course request is approved by the department head, dean, and the vice president for academic affairs. After a course is approved, all faculty members must participate in a 3-4 day training course which focuses on course development/conversion for the online environment. The training provides faculty access to WTOnline server where course materials reside. Development activities are facilitated through the Instructional Innovation and Technology Lab, where faculty obtain programming and multimedia support.

Input to WTOnline is provided by the Distance Learning subcommittee of the university Information Technology Committee. The subcommittee, made up of university faculty and staff provides recommendation on distance learning policy and procedures. The subcommittee provided input and approved this report, The West Texas A&M University Plan for Distance Education and Off-Campus Instruction. The plan was then approved by the Information Technology Committee at large.

In an effort to expand faculty and administrative input, a Distance Learning Advisory Committee, made up of faculty, staff, and administrators was formed in 1999. The charge of the committee is to provide input and make recommendations on academic and administrative policy issues related to distance learning. The committee is made up of two faculty members from each college, one member at-large, and one representative each from enrollment services and student services. Ex officio members include the online programmer and instructional designer for WTOnline. The Director of Academic Services chairs the committee, who makes recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The distance learning plan was also approved by this committee.

Part 2. Current Distance Education and Off-Campus Program Offerings and Modes

West Texas A&M University is in the process of initiating distance learning activities for some academic degree programs. Delivery technologies include Internet-based (as delivered via WTOnline) and interactive television delivery. The following degree programs are supported by courses offered via the Internet:

Graduate – Complete degrees approved by the Texas A&M University Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Master's Degree in Business Administration
Master's Degree in Education, Instructional Technology

Undergraduate – Complete degrees approved by the Texas A&M University Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Bachelor's Degree in Emergency Management Administration

Graduate – Courses leading to the completion of degrees (some campus-based courses are required).
Master's Degree in Education, Educational Diagnostician and Administration
Master's Degree in Education, Educational Administration
Master's Degree in Agriculture

Undergraduate – Courses leading to the completion of degrees (some campus-based courses are required).
Bachelor's Degree in Nursing (RN Completion)

The following degree programs are supported by courses offered via the Interactive Television:

Graduate - Courses leading to the completion of degrees (some campus-based courses are required, web-based courses are also an option).
Master's Degree in Education, Educational Administration

Undergraduate - Courses leading to the completion of degrees (some campus-based courses are required).
Bachelor's Degree in Physics

Approved Programmatic Descriptions:

Master of Education (M.Ed.) Degree, Instructional Technology
General Requirements - Meet all WTAMU graduate admission requirements.
Additional Requirements - Education Core: EDPD 5501, 5578, 6609, EPSY 5529. Instructional Technology Core: EDT 5510, 5520, 5530, 5540, 5550, and 5560. CIS 5443. Elective from another area is required.
5510. Foundations of Instructional Technology. Prerequisite: CIS 105 or equivalent. Overview providing background theory, research, and current and future practice in the field. (3 3 0)
5520. The Internet: Organization, Design and Resource Utilization. Prerequisite: CIS 105 or equivalent. Overview of organization and design of the Internet with emphasis on tools available for instructional and administrative application. Discussion of access and use

issues. Participants will develop an "acceptable use policy" for the educational environment. (3 3 0)
5530. Local and Wide Area Networks in Instructional Settings. Prerequisite: CIS 105 or equivalent. Planning, design, implementation and managing local and wide area networks in instructional settings. (3 3 0)
5540. Planning for Technology. Prerequisite: CIS 105 or equivalent. In-depth study of critical components of an educational technology plan. Development of educational specifications, design, selection, contracts, maintenance, staff development and training, and evaluation; organization and administration of learning resources. (3 3 0)
5550. Multimedia: Application and Techniques of Design. Prerequisite: CIS 105 or equivalent. Production course to familiarize the student with instruction/presentation software and materials relating to effective use of text, graphics, sound, images, and video combined with user interaction to enhance classroom instruction and/or presentations. (3 3 0)
5560. Principles and Practices of Distance Learning. Prerequisite: CIS 105 or equivalent. Principles and theories of distance learning, including design, delivery and evaluation. Participants will develop, present and evaluate instruction via distance-learning technologies. (3 3 0)

Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)
General Requirements - Admission to the M.B.A. degree program requires a total Graduate Management Assessment Test (GMAT) score of 475 or above for regular admission. M.B.A. degree students scoring at least 400 and less than 475 on the GMAT are admitted on probation. Graduate courses, excluding leveling courses, taken at WTAMU prior to submission of a GMAT score of at least 400 are subject to be disallowed and, therefore, potentially cannot be counted toward the M.B.A. degree. The requirements for the campus-based option are the same.

Students seeking the M.B.A. degree must first establish proficiency in accounting, economics, business statistics, computer information systems, management, marketing, finance and business law. This proficiency may be established by courses taken in an undergraduate program, by completing advanced standing examinations or by taking the following courses: ACC 5500, ECO 5500, CIS 5500, BST 5500, MGT 5500, MKT 5500, FIN 5500 and GBUS 5500.

Students who enter the M.B.A. program on probation may be required to take leveling courses in areas where a grade of "C" or lower was earned. A 3.0 average in leveling courses must be maintained by all M.B.A. students. Students whose average in leveling work falls below a 3.0 will be placed on probation. The student who fails to achieve the leveling grade point average the semester following probation will be suspended from the Graduate School. Students whose GMAT score remains below 400 after their first semester will also be suspended from the College of Business graduate programs.

Additional Requirements include ACC 5505, MGT 5518, FIN 5520, MGT 5534, MKT 5540, BST 5505, CIS 5505, either ECO 5505 or 5506, and 12 hours of electives

constitute the M.B.A program. From these 36 hours of core and elective courses, no more than 15 hours may be taken in any one academic area; i.e., management, marketing, etc.
Courses for Emphasis Areas (12 graduate hours)

Management*--six semester hours of management courses; six semester hours of elective courses.***
Marketing*--six semester hours of marketing courses; six semester hours of elective courses. ***
Agriculture**--12 semester hours of agriculture courses.

*These emphasis areas must include at least six semester hours of 5500-level courses in the College of Business.
**Agriculture emphasis area must include at least six semester hours of 5500-level courses in the Division of Agriculture.
***An elective course may be any graduate-level course in the College of Business, or with approval, up to two elective graduate courses may be taken from outside the College of Business.

Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences Degree
Emergency Management Administration

The major in Emergency Management Administration is a joint program between WTAMU and the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) Fire Protection Training Division and is the only four-year program in Texas. The program is designed for traditional students as well as non-traditional students. Courses are taught both in traditional settings and via distance learning using web-based courses and the Trans-Texas Video Conference Network (TTVN).

This degree assumes completion of an associate of applied science degree at a community college or completion of an appropriate occupational certificate prior to starting work on the BAAS degree at WTAMU. A maximum of 48 semester hours of academic credit may also be transferred to total 66 hours, the maximum number of hours accepted from a community college.

General education requirements and other University requirements include 36 advanced hours, 30 in residence at WTAMU, for a total of 133 semester credit hours with a minimum grade point average of 2.0. The BAAS degree includes a professional development core of 45 semester hours, 12 of which must be 300 to 400-level courses. Contact the dean of the Sybil B. Harrington College of Fine Arts and Humanities for details about this degree.

University Core Curriculum Requirements
Degree Requirements
- ECO 201 (to satisfy 3 hours of the social and behavioral sciences core
- ECO 202
- POSC 312, 402, 406, 431

- POSC 403 or MGT 330
- POSC 405 or MGT 430
- MKT 340, MGT 335, 411
- MC 350
- FSP 310, 450
- One course from AGRI 318, QBA 250, MATH 360, POSC 362 or PSY 304

Part 3. The Institutional Plan

Section 1. Institutional Issues

1. **The institution affirms compliance with *The Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs* (Appendix C*).***

   WTAMU affirmed its compliance with principles through a memorandum written by the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The memo was written in anticipation of the institution's participation in the Southern Regional Electronic Campus.

2. **The distance education program is consistent with the institution's educational mission.**

   The WTAMU mission statement as approved by the Texas A&M Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, reads:

   > West Texas A&M University, a member of The Texas A&M University System, is dedicated to providing high quality baccalaureate and graduate education using traditional delivery and distance learning where appropriate. West Texas A&M University is committed to serving as the principal academic, cultural, technical, service and research center of the multi-state region surrounding Canyon and Amarillo, through the collective and individual efforts of the faculty, staff and students. West Texas A&M University's mission is to educate students to be informed, responsible, creative and articulate decisions makers, who will exercise good citizenship, appreciate diversity and be professionally competitive.
   >
   > West Texas A&M University's major areas of emphasis include but are not limited to teacher preparation, business, agriculture, fine arts, nursing, and the sciences. All programs shall be built upon a solid foundation of required courses in communication, history and political science, and studies which develop strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills as well as an understanding of cultural diversity and an appreciation for the fine-arts and humanities.

3. **The institution has assessed that a market exists for distance education to be delivered by the institution, particularly when delivering complete degree and certificate programs.**

   In 1997, West Texas A&M University conducted a comprehensive Strategic Role Assessment (SRA) to appraise the institution's efforts in serving present and future needs of its service area. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:
   (a) Evaluate how well WTAMU is responding to community needs,
   (b) Reveal various constituencies' perceptions of the quality of WTAMU graduates,
   (c) Identify perceived strengths and weaknesses of the institution,
   (d) Identify new and emerging trends and educational requirements so WTAMU's academic offerings can acknowledge and respond to ever-changing community needs,
   (e) Establish a pattern for conducting continuing studies.

   From the data, the SRA directors postulated several conclusions. The conclusions took the form of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and recommendations. The weaknesses primarily focused on WTAMU's perceived isolation from the constituents of the Panhandle. It was noted that the lack of physical or psychological penetration outside the community of Canyon creates a barrier to community support. One of the opportunities identified by the SRA directors in response to the identified weaknesses included the offering of courses through distance education to better serve the educational needs of rural populations.

4. **The institution evaluates the overall effectiveness of distance education courses and programs (such as student learning, student retention, the effectiveness of the utilized technology, mechanisms to provide student feedback during the course, and comparability with campus-based programs) and the evaluation process is incorporated into overall institutional effectiveness efforts.**

   Two instruments have been utilized to collect data about the online learning environment. The West Texas A&M University Student Course Evaluation is the official course evaluation instrument. Items regarding attitude, method, content, interest, and instructor effectiveness are included. Data has also been collected through the WTOnline Evaluation Instrument (Appendix D). It considers the distance learning experience, technology operation and support. The instrument also collects information on student satisfaction.

   Initially, both instruments were administered at the end of semester face-to-face meeting. In many cases, it was felt that students were confusing the

"technology mediation" of the course with instructor effectiveness. Further the length of the instrument (as it is in the fourth iteration of the validation process), along with its electronic administration resulted in low return rates.

Since distance learning students are no longer required to come to campus, the two instruments are electronically administered at different times during the semester. The WTOnline Evaluation, measuring distance learning experience and technology operation is administered during month three providing formative feedback to the institution. The evaluation of instructor effectiveness, The West Texas A&M University Student Course Evaluation (Appendix E) is administered two weeks before the end of the semester.

Student learning. It is the responsibility of the academic department to ensure that students completing these programs or courses have acquired equivalent levels of knowledge and competencies to those acquired in traditional formats. The planning and development of instruction impact student learning outcomes. Faculty teaching courses online must complete a "Non-Traditional Course Request" (Appendix B). The course request describes the learning objectives and provides a description of the course. Faculty must show how the online section of the course is the same as a traditionally taught course, with equivalent learning outcomes as supported by various forms of assessment including projects and tests. The course request is approved by the department head, dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Cumulative data (four semesters) collected with this instrument show that students believe that the online format provides an effective learning environment and supports learning. When students were asked if the online format was effective, 48.2% agreed and 32.1% strongly agreed. When asked to respond to the statement, "Not much was gained by taking this course," 37.2% strongly disagreed and 51.5% disagreed. Anticipated grade data also indicated that students felt that they would do well in the online courses.

For the colleges providing total online programs, the tracking of student learning is ongoing. Comprehensive programmatic evaluation plans and end of program outcomes will be utilized as students complete the programs. Further, effort is being made in the College of Business and the College of Education and Social Sciences to compare student learning in the online versus the campus-based learning environments.

Student retention. Initially, the focus for online delivery of courses has been at the graduate level. Graduate students tend to be committed to the programs and their completion.
Recent data collection shows that students are returning to WTOnline to take courses. 50% of the reporting students indicated that they had previously taken online courses.

Course completion is also being tracked. In the Fall 1999 semester, 13.8 % of the students enrolled in WTOnline dropped their courses before the end of the semester. This compares with 7.3 % of the students taking campus-based courses. As 50% of the reporting students are new to WTOnline, learning how to "learn" in the online environment can be a challenge for students who have expectations of the traditional lecture-based course, and may account for the disparity. Starting in the Fall 2000 semester, students who are leaving courses will be tracked to more closely identify the type of student who is dropping, and their reasons for leaving the courses. Currently, a five-question exit survey is being planned to track the data. Follow-up phone contacts may also be utilized.

Overall, a majority of the surveyed students indicated that they would take another online course, with 38.6% agreeing and 41% strongly agreeing.

The effectiveness of the utilized technology. Technology access, operation, and support questions are asked every semester. When students were asked to rate the accessibility of the web delivered content, 28.2% rated it excellent, 33% rated it very good, and 27.2% rated it good. Similar responses were provided for the communication services that support interaction, including email, threaded discussion, and chat. When asked to rate online technical support, student's responses included: 25.3% excellent, 29.3% very good and 34.1% good. More support personnel have been added, not only to support dial-in connectivity needs, but to also support the online learning environment. Because most students come to the online university with their own Internet Service Providers, the need for remote access has leveled off, however, it is still an option for online students.

Technology upgrades have also taken place to better facilitate the online learning environment. A Dell 6300 quad Xeon 500 (1GB RAM and 27GB RAID 5, hot swappable with redundant power supplies) is used for web page service and communication. Streaming audio and video will also be added to upgrade the environment capabilities.

Mechanisms to provide student feedback during the course. Student feedback is provided via electronic mail with word processor and spreadsheet attachments, discussion boards, and chat rooms. Since interaction sustains the online learning environment, the effectiveness and the timeliness of the feedback is critical.
Students were asked if the interaction with their instructor contributed to their overall understanding of the course. 20.4% strongly agreed, 41.3% agreed, 23.3% were neutral, 10% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed. Faculty training must focus on technical proficiency in the use of interaction tools, as well as strategies for providing timely and effective feedback online. The training has been enhanced to include this content.

Comparability with campus-based programs. Students who come to the online classroom for the first time compare it to learning in the face-to-face setting. Students were asked if they would have rather taken the course in a classroom setting. 24.5% strongly disagreed, 27.2% disagreed, 15.9% were neutral, 15.1% agreed, 17.3% strongly agreed. Students were also asked if they would recommend courses to their friends. 39.9% strongly agreed, 34.6% agreed, 10.5% were neutral, 7.4% disagreed, and 7.6% strongly disagreed. Collected data is being analyzed as to elements of the online learning environment that do not compare favorably to the traditional classroom. Future data collection will focus on the type of student who does not feel successful in the online environment.

Data recently collected through the administration of a WT questionnaire indicated that 73% of the students surveyed preferred on-line courses (Appendix F).

5. **The institution has office(s) responsible for distance learning. Describe the placement of the office(s) in the institution's organization and explain how this provides the appropriate oversight of programs and faculty and student support. Identify the contact person or office at the institution where questions are answered for distance learners and for others.**

The distance learning function is part of the Academic Services unit in the Information Technology department at WTAMU. A Director of Academic Services, who provides oversight for all distance learning and instructional technology activities, heads this department. The network programmer provides systems and software maintenance, and faculty training and support for Internet delivery. Additional technical expertise is provided by the network analyst, media professional and graduate assistants. The Distance Enrollment Coordinator facilitates information requests and services for students at a distance, including admissions, registration, financial aid, advising, and payment. Technical support services are provided by the network programmer and the "Online Support" helpdesk. A half-time instructional designer is being added to the staff to assist the associate dean in the development of online courses. An organizational chart is provided (Appendix G).

Specifically, WTOnline serves as a development and delivery mechanism through which online courses are made possible. Each staff member contributes in a unique way, providing support for the student whom enters the virtual classroom and the faculty member who teaches there. Course development is facilitated through a team approach. The following contributions are made by each member:

(a) The faculty members are the content experts, instructional designers, and in some cases, HTML authors. The course content belongs to the faculty member. Further, all academic authority for courses offered remains with the academic departments from which they are taught.
(b) The WTOnline programmer creates and maintains the virtual learning environment and provides web programming, as well as HTML authoring expertise for faculty. The student-based WTOnline programming group assists the programmer.
(c) The WTOnline programmer and network analyst perform server-side programming and administer the website.
(d) The associate dean provides oversight for the diverse groups involved in the virtual university, administration of the site, and training and instructional design assistance for faculty.
(e) The instructional designer will take faculty through the course planning process and focus design activities.
(f) The media professional will assist faculty and the WTOnline staff with graphic, video, and audio development and innovation.
(g) An external services coordinator is employed to coordinate the resource access and procurement needs of the online faculty and students.

It must be pointed out that a team mentality further supports the organizational aspect of the online university; the participants share many tasks. The team members work together the semesters prior to and during the delivery of instruction.

6. The institution has established requirements for admissions, satisfactory student progress, and graduation requirements for distance education. If requirements differ from those of traditional students, please explain.

Requirements for campus-based and distance students are the same.

7. Policies relevant to transcripting, grading, and transfer credentials are in place. Please explain if they are different from on-campus courses.

Students will be graded based on the requirements of the course, with those grades being communicated to students via secure web-based grade books or e-mail. Grades, transcripts, and bills are all available on the web.

Transfer credits will be accepted by WTAMU from any accredited institution, regardless of course delivery method. Credit for distance learning courses and campus courses will be recorded identically on WTAMU transcripts.

8. **The institution has a process in place to address the needs of distance learners who fall under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please describe the process.**

   All students at WTAMU have access to assistance through the Disabled Students Office. Disabled Student Services personnel work with students who have a documented physical or learning disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. This is communicated to students through the following statement that appears on all syllabi on campus, and at a distance:

   > West Texas A&M University seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. The University will adhere to all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational. It is the student's responsibility to register with Disability Support Services and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodations.

   At a distance, contact with this office may be made through the DSS website and/or via electronic mail or phone. The coordinator can then make personal contact with professors regarding accommodation.

9. **SACS and other professional credentialing agencies have been notified, as appropriate. Please explain the status of these notifications.**

   The SACS substantive change request was submitted on April 7, 1999 (Appendix H). A letter of acceptance, dated June 30, 1999 was sent from the Executive Director, Commission on Colleges, James T. Rogers (Appendix I). A SACS Substantive Change committee visited the university on May 8-9, 2000. In preparation for this visit, a committee was assembled by the president, Dr. Russell Long, and chaired by Dr. Duane Rosa to oversee the readiness process. An update of the report, based upon Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board format, was developed by the SACS committee. This plan is a collaborative effort, with oversight and approval being provided by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and input from the Distance Learning Advisory Committee, as well as the Distance Learning subcommittee of the Information Technology Committee.

   As a result of the SACS visit on May 8-9, 2000, the University received six minor recommendations, which have been corrected. The University also received a commendation from the committee for its “careful and thorough planning for its distance learning program and for the impressive student and faculty support infrastructure created to build a strong and effective distance learning program.” On January 5, 2001, the University received a letter from

the Executive Director, SACS Commission on Colleges, James T. Rogers (Appendix I), indicating that the Commission continued accreditation of the University and approved the distance learning programs.

10. The institution has sufficient financial resources to initiate and maintain quality distance learning programs.

The financial aspects of distance learning were initially considered by the Distance Learning sub-committee of the Information Technology Committee, comparing the cost of providing a distance learning course to revenues produced by such course (Appendix A). The financial aspects were also considered from a student perspective, comparing the cost of taking a course on campus to taking a course at distance.

Distance learning activities have been partially funded through the Computer Access Fee ($5 per credit hour up to $50). Through the institutional Program Improvement Process, the Vice President for Academic Affairs identified the need for a Distance Learning account. The funding has been utilized to support training and faculty development activities.

A distance learning fee of up to $40 per credit hour has been requested and approved by the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents to satisfy further financial requirements and provide more support for faculty developing and students taking courses. Currently, WTAMU has assessed an distance learning fee of $25 per credit hour. Further, students who are only taking courses at a distance may request a waiver for the following campus-based fees:

Student Fees*

Fixed Fees		Waivable Fees		Total Fees	
Student Service	39.00	Health	24.20	Campus Student	Distance Student
Computer Access	15.00	Student Center Complex	9.00		
Designated Tuition	61.50	Traffic Safety	1.00		
Records	15.00	Recreational Sports	15.00	179.70	205.50
Distance Learning (DL students only)	75.00				
Total	205.50		49.20		

(*as shown for one 3-hour course, Texas resident)

The additional cost to a resident distance learning student is $25.80 for a 3-hour course.

Distance students are notified about the fee waiver through the WTOnline website, where the may download the request (Appendix J). The fee waiver must then be signed and returned to the WTAMU Business Office. Students registering online, are also notified via email that they are eligible for the fee waiver, and then directed to the website to download. Finally, students may obtain the request on campus through the Admissions office.

Expense and income data have been tracked since the initial delivery of online courses (Appendix K). This data is facilitating the further development of the program by providing real direction for funding and support issues.

11. **There is a financial plan for maintaining the support systems needed for the activities, including upgrading of systems currently being used.**

Expense and income data have been tracked since the initial delivery of online courses. At present, the data implies the following:

- An individual course costs approximately $12,000 to develop and deliver.
- An undergraduate course should have 15 students to be cost effective.
- A graduate course should have 10 students to be cost effective.
- The average faculty salary cost is $5,800 per course.
- Income is based on tuition and fees, weighted semester credit hours (WSCH), infrastructure funding $27.26/SCH and the 5% tenure supplement.
- The $25 per student credit hour was initially charged in the Spring 2000 semester, providing $65,450.
- Expense is based on salaries (Faculty, WTOnline and Information Technology personnel) plus 48% indirect cost (of all salaries). Hardware, software, operation and maintenance, and training are also considered.

WTOnline Financial Plan

Instructor salary of $5,800 per course (as part of a regular salaried position), average of 20 students per course.
00-01 Projections rounded to the nearest 100.

	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01*
Courses, #	16	40	80	98
Students, #	330	924	1,969	2,813
Income, $	**231,843**	**625,155**	**1,666,806**	**2,291,167**
Student Savings				
Miles, $0.325/mi	70,337	229,071	606,500	916,306
Driving, hrs	3,607	12,468	31,096	46,990
Expenses				
Instructor Salaries	89,972	188,460	395,797	523,618
Fac Development	15,000	16,000	10,000	20,000
Personnel				
WTOnline	37,654	79,485	121,020	192,867
Info Tech	21,400	24,450	8,226	8,470
Fringe Benefits	8,860	19,236	25,511	45,069
Indirect, 48%	104,447	128,614	279,828	383,049
Software, 3 yr	1,833	1,833	7,867	7,867
Hardware, 4 yr	9,500	11,000	15,000	15,000
O&M	15,000	15,000	22,000	23,800
TOTAL	**303,666**	**484,078**	**932,249**	**1,264,740**
Income/Expense Comparison	**(71,823)**	**141,077**	**734,557**	**1,026,427**

*Data for 00-01 does not include Summer 01.

Section 2. Educational Programs

1. **The institution has procedures in place for planning, development, approval and review of quality distance education programs. Please explain the process for programs. (Not for individual courses).**

   The WTAMU Curriculum Committee must approve all academic programs. Further, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents have provided programmatic approval for the three programs currently being delivered at a distance.

2. **Procedures are in place to insure student learning outcomes, student retention and student satisfaction is comparable between the distance delivery mode and the traditional on-campus format.**

   The WTAMU Student Course Evaluation (Appendix E) will be administered two weeks before the end of the semester. Moreover, to ensure the return of a more representative sampling of data students, the WTAMU Student Course Evaluation will serve as the students' "homepage" when they login to their online course. To get into the course, students must complete the evaluation.

   The data returned by this instrument is being used to compare the campus and online experiences as it is administered in all WTAMU courses. Departments delivering online courses may also add 5-6 questions related to their content area and its delivery online.

   Student learning outcomes. The planning and development of instruction impact student learning outcomes. Faculty teaching courses online must complete a "Non-Traditional Course Request" (Appendix B). The course request describes the learning objectives and provides a description of the course. Faculty must show how the online section of the course is the same as a traditionally taught course, with identical learning outcomes, as supported by projects and tests. The course request is approved by the department head, dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

   Courses taught online employ the same learning objectives and outcomes as those taught in the traditional setting. Ultimately, academic authority resides with the faculty member and department teaching the course. Content indicators on the WTAMU Student Course Evaluation indicate a mean score indicator of 3.02 for online courses, with an overall university mean score of 3.13 on a scale of 4.0. This data indicates similar satisfaction rates with the course content.

   For the colleges providing total online programs, the tracking of student learning is ongoing. Comprehensive programmatic evaluation plans and end of program outcomes will be utilized as students complete the programs. Further, effort is being made in the College of Business and the College of Education and Social Sciences to compare student learning in the online versus the campus-based learning environments.

   Student retention. (as discussed above) Initially, the focus for online delivery of courses has been at the graduate level. Graduate students tend to be committed to the programs and their completion. Recent data collection shows that students are returning to WTOnline to take courses, as 50% of the reporting students indicated that they had previously taken online courses.

Course completion is also being tracked. In the Fall 1999 semester, 13.8% of the students enrolled in WTOnline dropped their courses before the end of the semester. This compares with 7.3% of the students taking campus-based courses. As the data above indicates, 50% of the reporting students had never taken an online course. Learning how to "learn" in the online environment can be a challenge for students who have expectations of the traditional lecture-based course, and may account for the disparity. Starting in the Fall 2000 semester, students who are leaving courses will be tracked to more closely identify the type of student who is dropping, and their reasons for leaving the courses. Overall, a majority of the surveyed students indicated that they would take another online course, with 38.6% agreeing and 41% strongly agreeing.

Student satisfaction. Attitude indicators as reported by the WTAMU Student Course Evaluation show an overall score of 3.22 for online courses and 3.3 for all other university courses, an extremely positive indication for a start-up program. Interest indicators showed a mean score of 2.9 for online courses and 3.0 for campus-based courses. Again, the data indicates similar attitudes about the courses.

Instructor/student interaction rates also seem to affect the students' attitude toward the instructor. While the university mean rating for faculty is 3.37, instructors who reported frequent communication with students reported an average rating of 3.52. Again, the importance of timely and substantive communication is critical in the development of the online learning environment.

3. **Procedures are in place to evaluate all instructional materials developed by other organizations or institutions prior to use in distance education.**

WTAMU faculty have not utilized instructional materials developed elsewhere. As with all courses, the faculty member evaluates the text in accordance with course goals and objectives.

Package content and course management systems from outside vendors such as WebCT™, Blackboard, and Course Compass are being evaluated by faculty from the T. Boone Pickens College of Business and the College of Education and Social Sciences in a few courses.

Section 3. Faculty

1. **The qualifications for distance education faculty are the same as faculty teaching the same courses in a traditional on-campus format. Please describe rationale applied for making exceptions.**

   Instructors teaching WTAMU courses at a distance as a part of WTOnline are also faculty members at WTAMU. All faculty employed by the University meet SACS and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board guidelines as to faculty qualifications.

2. **The institution provides orientation and training for faculty involved in distance education programs. Please describe the faculty training activities.**

   All faculty teaching at a distance are required to participate in training. Training for Internet-based delivery of courses involves the following:

   Orientation to WTOnline. As indicated, faculty members are taken into the online classroom, where training materials are mediated. The technology is introduced in an effort to provide navigation, as well as functional orientation. Faculty members soon recognize that once they have mastered the training site, they have skills to develop and maintain their classrooms.

   Development and communication tools. As faculty members are provided orientation to the training materials, they learn to use the development and communication tools that will help them interface with their online classrooms. Netscape Communicator is the development platform for WTOnline, including Messenger for e-mail communication and Composer for web page development and publishing. Synchronized chat and threaded discussion forum are also utilized. Training participants will use these tools to participate in all training activities, thus providing critical technology experiences.

   Faculty who are piloting the WebCT™ development tool will be provided one-on-one assistance by WTOnline staff.

   Instructional design issues. A formal review of instructional design theories and models are presented. These are linked to each faculty members' individual, discipline-specific teaching experiences. Then, an example of how principles of instructional design have defined the development of an online course is presented.

   Promoting online interaction. Designing for student/student, student/instructor, and student/content interaction is critical to the

success of the online learning environment. Faculty are asked to consider ways that student interaction occurs in a face-to-face setting, and are reminded that the only way they know that their students are participating in their online course is if they "interact" with them. Methods and tools for interaction are utilized to help faculty understand this process.

Assessment and management. Assessment is addressed throughout the training, especially as it relates to interaction activities. A focus on technology assistance is provided. Alternative assessment such as portfolio or web page development, collaborative projects, and interchanges are presented. Testing capabilities such as development and security are demonstrated. Procedures for delivery and proctoring are discussed. Currently, WTOnline staff provide the programming for test interaction, randomization, and reporting. The staff also work with students to arrange proctoring (on-site and at a distance) for paper-based and electronic tests. Course management activities focus on communication and feedback activities.

Visual design. Human-computer interface issues are presented in an effort to promote an effective learning environment. Specifically, text, color, and graphics issues are reviewed. Examples and non-examples are critical to this portion of the training since early inclinations in web page development are to include "all" the bells and whistles.

Analysis of course examples. Based on experiences brought to the training as educators and the training materials provided in the training session, faculty members have the opportunity to evaluate three courses, as to instructional and visual design and opportunities for interaction.

Example course. Faculty are given a paper-based planning tool that shows the tools available to them in the online classroom. Because the training provides the technology-based experiences needed to enhance their teaching and learning experiences, faculty members are now ready to make some decisions about design of their virtual classroom.

Module development. Faculty create one module of instruction during the training session, in an effort to promote effective design and delivery techniques. Faculty who are piloting WebCT™ and other types of packaged content programs will be provided assistance in the modification and revision of the content.

Library resources. Faculty are oriented to the access and use of library resources. More attention to the integration and support of the curriculum will focus future training activities.

Interactive television. An orientation program is offered for faculty offering courses through interactive television, focusing on use of equipment and delivery procedures.

3. Procedures are in place for appropriate instructional staff and for evaluation of faculty involved in the distance education program.

"Each faculty member is expected to make effective teaching in a quality environment the highest priority" (West Texas A&M University Faculty Handbook, 2000, p. 15). As covered in Section C. #2, provisions are made for training to assist faculty in the development of effective teaching practices in the online environment.

Annual Professional Summary. "All faculty members and academic administrators are evaluated annually. Faculty members are evaluated on teaching effectiveness, scholarly activity/creative work and professional service" (WTAMU Faculty Handbook, 2000, p.17). As outlined in the WTAMU Faculty Handbook, each faculty member must complete the West Texas A&M University Annual Professional Summary (Appendix M) that documents progress made in each of the described areas. Promotions from one academic rank to another and from one salary level to another are based on merit. The areas are further described in the Operational Definitions of Merit (Appendix L). Academic department heads then evaluate the faculty members as to progress in the outlined areas.

Teaching Effectiveness is partially documented through the West Texas A&M University Student Course Evaluation (Appendix E). Tenured faculty are required to be evaluated in all courses for either the fall or spring semesters. Tenure-track, non-tenured and adjunct faculty, part-time instructors are required to be evaluated in all courses for both the fall and spring semesters. In both cases, summer semesters are optional" (WTAMU Faculty Handbook, 2000, p.17).

All students (traditional and distance learning) are required to complete the West Texas A&M University Student Course Evaluation as to instructor effectiveness. Additional questions may be included for the distance learning courses if the academic departments so choose. To ensure the return of a more representative sampling of data, The West Texas A&M University Student Course Evaluation will serve as the students' "homepage" when they log in to their online course, two weeks prior to the end of the semester. To get into the course, students must complete the evaluation.

A separate instrument which focuses on the online environment and technology effectiveness "The WTOnline Evaluation" (Appendix D) will be administered during month three of the semester. This instrument is in validation and is being utilized to provide formative feedback to the institution and academic departments.

In addition to instructor evaluations, the West Texas A&M Annual Professional Summary (Appendix L) considers other aspects of teaching effectiveness. Faculty are asked to, "List new and innovative teaching methods including distance learning techniques" (WTAMU Faculty Handbook, Section I (d.) 2000). Faculty may also list "new course developments" as part of their professional service to the university " (WTAMU Faculty Handbook, Section III (f.) 2000).

Operational definitions of merit. Promotions from one academic rank to another and from one salary level to another are based on merit. The areas outlined above (teaching effectiveness, scholarly achievement/creative work, and professional service) are further described in the Operational Definitions of Merit (Appendix L). An indicator of teaching effectiveness is in the area of "improvement of teaching": "Investigates and experiments with new and/or proven teaching methods, including instructional technology or distance learning techniques" (Appendix L, Section I (d.) 2).

A faculty committee was convened in February to consider the operational definitions of merit as they relate to distance teaching and learning. The committee is gathering information and will make recommendations to the vice president for academic affairs regarding faculty merit.

4. **A policy exists that addresses faculty teaching load for those involved in distance education. Please attach policy and explain rationale.**

Faculty members who teach in WTOnline may be given three hours of release time during the semester that a course is being developed. This determination is made at the academic department level as overall teaching loads and financial requirements reside at this level. The WTAMU Faculty Handbook (2000) makes this support possible through the provision for special requests:

> Other special requests to meet unique department programs and needs, made with due consideration for responsibilities of the department and within guidelines covering average course sizes and student-faculty ratio, can be granted as deemed necessary and desirable through appropriate administrative channels (WTAMU Faculty Handbook, 2000, Appendix VII, #6 (b.)).

In most cases, regular teaching loads will be observed during the semester of delivery.

The University also provides TA assistance for large on-line courses (minimum enrollment 30 for graduate and 35 for undergraduate).

5. **A process exists for evaluating the credentials of faculty employed by other institutions that are teaching courses for which your institution is awarding credit.**

   Faculty are not employed by other institutions that teach in WTOnline. However, courses are delivered via the TTVN network to WTAMU. For courses other than those taught in the Physics Consortium, acceptance of credential comes through the faculties being part of a Texas A&M University System entity. The Physics Consortium faculty are in place through a memorandum of agreement between the participating institutions.

6. **The institution has policies on intellectual property, faculty compensation, copyright guidelines and the distribution of revenue (if applicable). Summarize policies that address issues raised by distance education.**

   WTAMU has rules related to intellectual property which are subject to the policies set by the Texas A&M System (WTAMU Faculty Handbook, Appendix II, p.27-29, 2000).

   As WTAMU is presently delivering courses, an intellectual property agreement has been developed and is being utilized (Appendix N). Pre-packaged courses developed at WTAMU are the property of WTAMU and the authoring faculty member. Use of the course or course materials is negotiated on a per use basis by the faculty member and the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs. Any faculty member wishing to use the course or course materials elsewhere must negotiate with the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs if WTAMU services or special equipment were used in the creation of the course (Appendix M).

Section 4. Student Support Services

1. **The institution provides distance learners access to appropriate student services, such as admissions, registration, academic advising, remedial services, placement services, testing and assessment,**

orientation, computing departments, financial aid offices, counseling, and helpdesk/hot line.

Student support services for the distance students are provided through the Enrollment Management and Student Services departments on campus. A web- and paper-based guide has been developed to describe the services for the distance student (Appendix N).

To further facilitate a high-level of service, direct interaction (data input/output from the web browser) with university administrative computing systems will be in place by Fall 2001. Computer Services staff are in the process of upgrading the administrative software system to facilitate web access. Currently, the Distance Enrollment Coordinator (DEC) facilitates this process by retrieving web-based input and manually entering the information into the administrative system. The DEC also provides web-based output to distance students.

Electronically accessible materials. Electronically accessible materials facilitate resource distribution. For both Internet-based and interactive television courses, web sites, e-mail, and listservs are used in the distribution of resources. In some cases, fax, and the mailing of materials may be utilized.

At present web access to enrollment services activities is available through the WTOnline web site. Oversight for these activities is provided through the Distance Enrollment Coordinator, as these processes are semi-automated. A fully automated web presence for enrollment management activities will be in place Spring 2002.

Student purchase of resource materials. Student purchase of resource materials is facilitated through the WTAMU Internet-based bookstore, linked to WTOnline. All texts, lab books, reference materials, etc., that are needed in distance courses are made available for purchase via a www form. Once the transaction is completed, the WTAMU Bookstore sends the order to the student via U.S. mail.

General information availability. General information availability is facilitated through WTOnline. All information pertaining to the successful enrollment, participation, and completion of distance courses is made available for students on the WTOnline website.

Admissions. Admission requirements for students at a distance are the same as those on campus. Students may be admitted after completing the "Texas Common Application" form. Once the web-based application form is received by the university, students are contacted via online and U.S.

mail with further processing requirements. A separate application for graduate studies is also available online.

Skills assessment. At present, a listing of baseline technology skills, as well as hardware and software requirements is available for students to review. Students having difficulty with technology use will find tutorials in the Internet-based course website, as well as a frequently asked question (FAQ) section. Students may also ask questions via an interactive form within the website.

Course registration. Students may register via a web-based interactive form for Internet-based courses. Registration for all courses, including interactive television courses, is available through telephone registration. Web-based registration for all university courses is planned for Fall 2002.

Financial aid. Student Financial Services provides both technical assistance and a comprehensive program of scholarships, grants and loans to assist eligible students in their academic pursuits. Online information regarding application requirements, deadlines, and required forms are available. Links to federal and state financial aid websites and staff response to email information requests are also available.

Records maintenance. The stringent classification of students as to campus (if taking any campus courses) and distance (if taking no campus courses) is critical in records maintenance. Enrollment Management personnel initiate services and assess fees based on this classification. Moreover, all services related to records management are the same for campus-based and distance students.

Academic advising and counseling. Academic advising and counseling for students is done by faculty using either e-mail or telephone. In addition, the *University Catalog* is available online to the students.

The Office of Career and Counseling Services provides online psycho-educational information, as well as extensive job search tools. Online resume referral databases and video conference interviewing is also available.

Other services available. Library services are available to the student through WTOnline, including reference, electronic information systems, and document delivery request. In addition, an on-line link is available for students to purchase textbooks, lab books, and reference materials from the University Bookstore.

Wellness Services is promoted through the “Online Wellness Center”.

Access to educational programming and nutritional counseling. The website includes health links, fitness assessments, a calorie calculator, and a discussion forum.

The Testing Services' website provides information regarding college admissions and placement tests and links to testing websites. Information regarding Tutor Assistance program and personal email is available.

2. **Distance learners have access to library resources of an appropriate breadth and quality for the distance education program(s) offered.**

The Distance Education Library Services (DELS), was established in order to provide WTOnline students with library resources similar to those available to campus-based students. Many pages describing services available to distance learners, research tools and methods, and actual library resources such as databases are available at http://www.wtamu.edu/library/.

A proxy server is set up to allow users coming in to the system from other domains (via outside Internet Service Providers) to access the electronic resources provided in the library. Students who are not coming in through the online server will not have the same level of access.

A variety of services are available to WTOnline students including:

- Access to research databases
- Online request for books and articles
- Book and article delivery
- Reference assistance
- Borrowing privileges to libraries participating in the TexShare and LEIAN consortiums
- Access to databases via GALILEO
- Web-based library instruction

Document delivery is being initiated through an interactive form and/or e-mail link provided on the library www site, or through a phone call. Inter-library loan, fax, and the U.S. mail are utilized to deliver requested items. An External Services Coordinator is employed to coordinate these functions.

Section 5. Distance Education Facilities and Support Services

1. **The institution has available the facilities and equipment necessary to deliver its distance learning program.**

Course delivery will be mediated via the Internet and interactive television. Internet-based delivery is place-independent; consequently, any student with a computer that has an Internet connection (direct IP or dial-in) may participate in a course. The Internet-based delivery of courses includes the following hardware/software in the facilitation of student/student, student/content and student/instructor interaction:

WTOnline Hardware

Equipment	Legacy	Current
Web Server	online.wtamu.edu Clone Dual Pentium Pro 200 OS: MS NT 4.0 Software: Netscape Enterprise	wtonline.wtamu.edu Dell 6300 Quad Xeon 500 OS: Linux Software: Apache
Chat Server	chat.wtamu.edu Power Play Dual	streaming.wtamu.edu Dell 2300 Dual PII

	Power PC 603 Software: MS Internet Chat Client: Java IRC	350 OS: NT 4.0 Software: E-Share Client: Browser
Threaded Discussion	news.wtamu.edu Gateway Pentium 133 Software: Netscape Collabra Client: Netscape Communicator	streaming.wtamu.edu Dell 2300 Dual PII 350 OS: NT 4.0 Software: E-Share Client: Browser
Mail Server	mail.wtamu.edu Clone Pentium 90 Software: Netware 3.12 Client: Netscape Communicator	mail.wtamu.edu Dell 4300 Dual PII 450. Software: Netware 4.11 Client: Netscape Communicator
Proxy Server	Software: Netscape Proxy Server	Customized PERL script.
Streaming Server	None	streaming.wtamu.edu Dell 2300 P2 350 OS: NT 4.0 Software: Real Server Client: Browser
Database Server	None	wtonline.wtamu.edu Dell 6300 Quad Xeon 500 Software: MySQL
Dial-up Capability	24 incoming lines (33.6 KBPS)	48 incoming lines (56 KBPS)

The Trans Texas Video Network (TTVN) operated by the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS), provides the data connection to the Internet via a transport infrastructure that consists of a network of T-1 digital telecommunications circuits. Each circuit is multiplexed to carry simultaneous videoconference and data traffic between network locations. The TTVN network provides two-way multi-point digital videoconferencing, and data transmission services to the TAMUS university campuses and a variety of other locations, including over 60 videoconference facilities in 29 Texas cities. WTAMU currently utilizes two .25 T1 video channels in two classrooms and one conference room.

The Panhandle Information Network (PIN) has also provided a video connection to the Panhandle region. The PIN consortium is made up of 46 school districts, three community colleges, and WTAMU. There are 20 video conference facilities within the network. WTAMU currently utilizes a .5 T1 video channel in one classroom.

As of June 1, 2000, the network services provided PIN will move to EdNet 16, a network operated by the Region XVI Educational Service Center. The service center provides support for K-12 schools in the Texas Panhandle. WTAMU's access to the new network will be maintained at the current level.

2. **Arrangements have been made for off-campus delivery of required laboratories, clinical placement sites, workshops, seminars, etc. associated with distance learning activities.**

   None of the current offerings require such facilities at this time.

The Appendices to this document can be requested from West Texas A&M University.

WTOnline Questionnaire

1. Would you prefer to take this as a regular course at WTAMU?

   1 = Yes 2 = No

2. Would you have taken this course if it had been offered during the day at WTAMU?

   1 = Yes 2 = No

3. Would you have taken this course if it had been offered at night at WTAMU?

   1 = Yes 2 = No

4. Are you taking other regular (face-to-face) classes at WTAMU?

   1 = Yes 2 = No

4a. If yes:

   1 = day 2 = night

5. How far do you live from campus (one way)?

   1 = on campus

   2 = less than 25

   3 = 25 – 50

   4 = 50 – 100

   5 = 100 – 200

   6 = 200 – 300

   7 = more than 300

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE FALL 2000

Response	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4A	Q5
1	258	304	356	586	382	201
2	699	651	599	361	193	282
3						116
4						167
5						105
6						16
7						68
TOTAL	957	955	955	947	575	955

Note: 1,311 enrollments as of the 12th class day

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4a	Q5
Percent that answered 1 = Yes	27%	32%	37%	61%	66%	
Percent that answered 2 = No	73%	68%	63%	38%	34%	

Results of the questionnaire are:

73% of the responses preferred the online class to the traditional on campus course; 68% would not have taken the class if it had been offered on campus during the day; 63% would not have taken the class if it had been offered on campus at night; 61% of the responses are taking another class at WTAMU. Of the 61% taking another class at WTAMU, 66% are taking day classes and 34% are taking night classes

MILAGE SAVED

Distance from Campus in miles	No. of Students	Percentage	Miles Saved
On campus	201	21%	
Less than 25	282	30%	126,900
25 – 50	116	12%	130,500
50 – 100	167	17%	375,750
100 – 200	105	11%	393,750
200 – 300	16	2%	
More than 300	68	7%	
TOTAL	955		1,026,900

Note: Prorated 1,311 enrollments, 955 responses = 1,409,703 miles saved with 23,495 hours saved and a possible $458,153 savings to students.
Assumptions: Online enrollments replace night classes to total 15 round trips at 60 miles per hour. Students over 200 miles away would not have attended an on campus course. For 100 – 200 miles away from campus, 125 miles was used in the calculation.